

VIETNAMESE AFFAIRS STAFF
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

DATE: 3 June 1970

TO:
FROM:
SUBJECT:

[Redacted]

REMARKS:

Attached is [Redacted] much
appreciated draft cut at our list of pros
and cons. I would like to caucus on
this briefly at 1345 in my office.

[Redacted]
George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

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3 June 1970

SUBJECT: Strategy for Convoking an International Conference on
Indochina

I. It is difficult to discuss the pros and cons of the alternative approaches for convoking an international conference on Indochina without

(a) Making assumptions with respect to the primary U. S. purpose behind the effort.

(b) The readiness of the U. S. and Hanoi to move away from basic positions which both sides have adhered to firmly throughout the Paris talks.

2. The draft paper seems implicitly to assume that Hanoi's readiness to negotiate has been increased by recent developments in Cambodia and that there are additional levers of influence which the U. S. could manipulate to cause Hanoi to accept and participate in an international conference after U. S. forces withdraw from Cambodia. We believe these assumptions would prove false, at least during the summer of 1970. It is possible that Hanoi will be willing at some later date to reach a compromise political solution in South Vietnam but it is not likely to respond to any call for an international conferences in circumstances where its bargaining position appears weakened.

Hanoi would, of course, welcome an international conference if it had been assured in advance that the U.S. purpose was to use the conference as a ^{front} cover for making major concessions and withdrawing from Vietnam. But if the primary purpose of the U.S. Government was to improve its domestic and international image, Hanoi could be expected to discern this fact and rebuff any call for a conference.

II. Pros and Cons of the Four Approaches

A. CASE I -- A public U.S. call for a conference

PROS (a) A public call would be well received in much of the non-Communist world but this favorable reception would be limited.

CONS (a) There have already been calls for an international conference; a U.S. initiative would probably be viewed primary^{ly} as a propaganda move unless it soon brought results.

(b) Hanoi, not having been consulted in advance, would denounce the U.S. action as meaningless.

(c) ^{Resort to} ~~Result of~~ this approach, in the absence of advanced understandings with Hanoi, would tend to prejudice the future usefulness of the international conference mechanism.

(d)

CASE 2 -- Enlist the assistance of the Secretary General, the French, and/or the Co-chairman

PROS (a) Public knowledge of this U.S. initiative might have some marginal beneficial effects in the non-Communist world on the U.S. image.

CONS (a) None of these intermediaries have any particular influence on Hanoi; Hanoi would not view a U.S. appeal to them as a serious, non-propagandistic effort. If the U.S. had some new substantive proposals to put to Hanoi, there are better channels available.

CASE 3 -- Secret discussions with the Soviets

PROS (a) Soviets are in direct contact with Hanoi and could provide a secure channel for indirect ^{US} communication with Hanoi.

(b) Soviets have some interest in containing Indochina conflict and limiting Chinese influence in Hanoi.

(c) Soviets can exercise some influence on Hanoi.

CONS (a) Soviets not entirely reliable as intermediaries; their interests not parallel or common with U.S. ✓

(b) Soviets not willing exert any real pressure on Hanoi.

(c) Hanoi might not wish work through Soviets because of its problems in balancing relations with Peking. Hanoi might prefer contact through Norwegians or direct private talks ✓

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with U.S. representative if U.S. has something interesting to

say "which would make it possible for an international conference to be convoked and for the presence of North Vietnam to be assured."

CASE 4 -- Direct talks in Paris through a senior U.S. Political Figure

PROS (a) Naming of a senior U.S. figure to Paris talks delegation would permit Hanoi ~~return~~ to return its senior negotiators without loss of face.

(b) If Hanoi is in mood to explore ways and means of a Vietnam or Indochina settlement on a serious basis, arrival of a senior U.S. figure in Paris would provide them pretext for making a private approach without giving public appearance of moving from weakness.

(c) Direct talks in Paris would permit exploration of possibilities for an Indochina conference while reducing the risks of misunderstanding inherent in use of intermediaries. ✓

(d) Only basis for convoking an international conference is to secure Hanoi's agreement in advance; direct private talks are most reliable channels to accomplish this objective. If effort fails, future prospects for a conference not necessarily harmed.

(e) Appointment of a senior negotiator would, by itself, produce positive reaction in non-Communist world and would be viewed as a serious non-propagandistic step.

CONS (a) Hanoi might read appointment of senior U.S. figure as sign of weakness on U.S. side.

(b) Senior political figure might not be familiar with history of Paris negotiations and might create misunderstandings by inadvertent compromise of U.S. or GVN positions in private talks.

(c)

